



SPRING 2013
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AMBS window

IS THE COST OF SEMINARY WORTH IT?

A **AMBS students answer this question in this issue. We also invite readers to reflect on this question with their pastors and with people who have gifts for ministry. Then use the contact information on page 3 to join us in making seminary education affordable for students who are preparing for ministry.**



Jacob Hess

Truth #1: Seminary is expensive. Truth #2: Seminary is also incredibly transformative. Most of us students live in the strained tension between these

truths. Thankfully, AMBS works diligently to chip away at the veracity of the first truth while bolstering the precious potential of the second. How many other educational institutions, after all, have lowered rent by 15% recently?!

More personally, AMBS's need-based support and matching grants have helped my family make it through seminary without

diving into debt. For this, and so much more, I am thankful. Though I may not be leaving seminary with a bulging wallet or an enviable savings account, I will be leaving as one transformed and better equipped to serve Christ's church and our broken world.

Jacob Hess is a student in the Master of Arts: Peace Studies program. Jacob is doing an internship this year with the Center for Community Justice in Elkhart, Ind.



Deborah-Ruth Ferber

The first semester of being a member of the AMBS community has been a good investment. AMBS was a more expensive option

for furthering my studies, but the quality of the school outweighs the cost. Seminary education is worth it for me not just because of the degree, but because of the classes and community which have fostered my stay here.

I am willing to make this investment because of the maturing that takes place from being a part of AMBS. I am not the same person I was six months ago as a result of being shaped by this community in incredible ways. The low-key atmosphere, classes which stretch my critical thinking, the connection between faculty and students, and extracurricular involvement have all cultivated a new identity for me.

I was blessed by the support of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Mennonite Church Canada, and AMBS, because I could not have considered seminary without them. I want to take it a step further, though: it is not just the funds, but the confidence, support and encouragement receiving those funds gave to me that inspired me.

Deborah-Ruth Ferber is a student from Leamington, Ont. Previously, she participated in !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth. This summer she anticipates joining L'Arche Daybreak, Richmond Hill, Ont.

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IS THE COST OF SEMINARY WORTH IT?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Caitlin Michelle Desjardins

My time at AMBS has been the most formative and crucial educational experience of my life thus far.

When I was a recent college graduate who

hoped to study full-time, receiving a merit scholarship that covered my tuition was an incomparable gift. I knew even before I was offered a scholarship that God was calling me to AMBS and there I would thrive. The ability to attend and focus on my studies and investing in the community that is such a distinctive blessing of AMBS without loans and financial worries has deeply enriched my time here. AMBS, beyond anything, has been a place where I have discovered a deep love for Christ's church and all of God's people. I can confidently say I am leaving AMBS both ready and enthusiastic to dedicate my life to building Christ's church and serving with all that I am. I am so grateful to everyone who has made that possible. An education at AMBS is truly priceless, building God's kingdom in remarkable ways.

Caitlin Desjardins anticipates graduating in May with a Master of Divinity degree and a focus on theological studies.



Jocelyn Graber

I am now faced with the repayment of student loans for my seminary education. Was it worth it? Yes, a resounding yes!

The cost of a seminary education is

the cost of answering God's call; it is the cost of discipleship. I am reminded of the financial assistance from my congregation and from our conference. I am humbled by the many donors who unknowingly contributed to my education, and that of many others, because they believe that an Anabaptist education for our denominational leaders and pastors will strengthen the churches to serve as God's witness to the world. I am touched by the many prayers that are behind those donated dollars and from those who are unable to give as generously as they would like.

AMBS is not a tuition-driven institution. The financial cost is shared by the community of believers who support the vision of the seminary and the Anabaptist faith. I still have loans because I chose not to work while being a full-time student, but thanks be to God, AMBS helped to transform my life, and that is priceless.

Jocelyn Graber earned the Master of Divinity in spring 2012. She studied at AMBS—Great

Plains in addition to taking classes on the Elkhart campus. She now is a development officer for AMBS, serving in the Great Plains region.



Theo Odhiambo

At AMBS I find the community in which a leader can be safely wrong and the space to learn from the mistakes. The experienced mentorship of a

professor gives the future leader much-needed skills that simply cannot be learned or honored by reading a book or attending a weekend conference. Being told you are wrong by the right person can be the best thing to ever happen to a leader.

Seminary is a sacrifice. Plans are delayed, resources are expended, and criticism can be abundant, but all of this contributes to the development and growth that is vital to thriving in ministry.

Theo Odhiambo is a Master of Divinity student, after earlier earning a Master of Arts: Theological Studies. He and his family returned to Elkhart from Tanzania where he had served as a school administrator. ●

Page 1 photo: AMBS students Tobias Magatti and Sara Erb and visiting scholar Dr. Won-Bum Chung listen intently to in a fall class on economic justice.

AMBS Window SPRING 2013 Volume 23 Issue 2

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

ALUMNI NEWS

The Institute of Mennonite Studies has released a book telling the story of **Emma Richards (Bachelor of Theology 1950)** and her ordination, the first ordination of a woman for congregational ministry in the Mennonite Church. *According to the grace given to her: The ministry of Emma Sommers* traces the roots of Emma's call and the encounters that shaped her legacy as model and mentor. See www.ambs.edu/publishing/New-publications.cfm.

Franklin Breckenridge (Master of Divinity 1999) and Cora, his wife, were recognized in October for their leadership and service to the Indiana NAACP.

Lauren Friesen (Master of Divinity 1970) has been granted the Outstanding Alumni Award by Pacific School of Religion (where he earned an MA and PhD). Lauren is the chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Andy Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2007) is coeditor of *A faith embracing all creatures: Addressing commonly asked questions about Christian care for animals*, published by Cascade Books. **Malinda Berry (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2000)**, **Nekeisha Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2008)** and Andy wrote chapters. ●

HELP STUDENTS PAY THE COST



Snapshot of student aid and scholarships

Percentage of students who receive aid:

- Full-time students: 80%
- Part-time students: 60%

Percent of tuition that full-time students receive in aid (average): 38.5% (excludes full-tuition scholarships)

Percent of students whose aid includes gifts from conferences and congregations: 38%

Number of students currently receiving full-tuition scholarships: 6

Number of full-tuition scholarships available this fall: 2

Long-standing full-tuition scholarships for students demonstrating gifts for ministry are the Church Leadership Award and Next Generation Scholarships.

A new Anabaptist Scholarship will begin this fall. This will cover half of tuition for students who identify with the Anabaptist faith but are not members of Mennonite congregations. Applications for fall 2013 were due in February. For more details,

visit www.ambs.edu/admissions/Anabaptist-Scholarship.cfm

Assist students in paying for seminary study

Church Partnership: AMBS matches aid that students receive from congregations and conferences. Details of this match will change in fall; visit www.ambs.edu/admissions/documents/Church-Partnership.pdf for information. Forms for this aid for 2013–14 are due by May 1.

Scholarships: You can establish a scholarship with a minimum gift of \$25,000 or contribute to an existing scholarship. AMBS development officers can assist donors in doing this.

President's Circle: Make a commitment to a level of giving to AMBS each year. This helps AMBS anticipate how much aid can be given to students as well as how to fund the day-to-day work of the seminary. A new President's Circle is the **Fidelity Circle**, in which donors set up a recurring electronic gift, usually by credit card.

Designate a gift for student aid:

Friends of AMBS, when they send contributions, can designate all or part of the gift to go to student aid. (This aid will go to the general student aid fund, not to the account of a specific student.)

Contact us

AMBS development office
development@ambs.edu

AMBS financial aid office
jwalker@ambs.edu
Or call 800.964.2627 •

NEW MASTER OF DIVINITY WAITING TO LAUNCH

AMBS anticipates offering a new plan of study for the Master of Divinity degree, available in two different modes of study:

Master of Divinity Connect will allow students to earn a Master of Divinity degree even if they cannot move to campus. By taking most courses online and visiting campus occasionally for intensive learning and formation, students can apply what they are learning to their current context of ministry or work.

The **Master of Divinity Campus** will build on the long-standing strengths of AMBS. Students will benefit from the mentoring, formation and fellowship that are provided in daily intentional community life.

AMBS awaits approval from accrediting agencies with the anticipation of offering these two options for the Master of Divinity this fall. To sign up to receive more information as it is available, visit www.ambs.edu/academics/Master-of-Divinity-Connect.cfm

Photo: Joel Ickes from Etna Green, Ind., is a first-year student in the Master of Divinity program.



YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Volunteers are essential to much that happens at AMBS, especially to hosting events such as the annual Pastors Week. Several volunteers returned in January to assist with preparations as well as with special maintenance projects, including Helen and Wilbur Yoder from Wellman, Iowa; Hedy (pictured) and Ed Rempel from Chatham, Ont.; and Cathie and Wes Braun from Keewatin, Ont. Local volunteers also are valuable, contributing to the beauty of the campus, serving in the library and assisting with office tasks. All volunteers have opportunities to join in chapel services, eat meals with the seminary community and use resources in the library. Learning to know students and faculty is often a highlight of the volunteer experience.

Volunteers' time, energy, expertise and hospitality are gifts to AMBS. Tasks are varied, so if you are interested in contributing your time and skills, AMBS has opportunities for you. Please contact Viridiana Navarro: volunteercoordinator@ambs.edu •



The Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore at AMBS serves all who are interested in books about Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and ministry. Seminary student Martin Navarro (right) is bookstore manager and students, such as Charles Bontrager (left), serve the customers—who are not limited to students and faculty. See www.ambs.edu/bookstore.

Commencement: May 25

Celebrate with 2013 graduates on Saturday, May 25. The commencement service, at 2:30 p.m. at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., will feature speaker Lydia Harder, former director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

New books

- *John* in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series, by Willard Swartley, Ph.D., professor emeritus
- *Living Gift: John's Jesus in Meditation and Poetry, Art and Song*, compiled by Willard Swartley

Webinar

Discerning the Powers: Moral Discernment, Theology and Mission, May 1, 2:00–3:30 p.m. Eastern, with Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist Studies.

Summer courses

See details: www.ambs.edu/academics/summer-courses.cfm

May 28–June 14

- **Greek Readings: Synoptic Gospels**
- **Seminar in Theology: Baptism**

June 17–28

- **The Five Scrolls**
- **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations**
- **Celebrating the Christian Year**

June 28–29 (hybrid)

- **Pastoral Counseling and Theology**

July 8–19

- **Faith Formation and Spirituality: Adults and Seniors**

AMBS–Great Plains summer course

- **Family Systems and Pastoral Care**, May 28–June 15 •

PRESIDENT'S WINDOW SARA WENGER SHENK



It's impossible to put a money value on effective and visionary leadership for the church. No price tag comes close to marking the worth of a wise biblical interpreter who knows what makes for peace in the midst of a church conflict. There's no way to calculate what adequate payment would be for a pastor who tenderly shepherds your family after searing tragedy strikes.

Is Mennonite seminary education worth its cost? The answer is straightforward and unequivocal. Absolutely. Frankly, the privilege it is to join a community devoted

over decades to dwelling in the Scriptures and to best pastoral practices is priceless. Compassionate, competent and confident leaders play an immensely critical role in the flourishing of healthy communities everywhere.

Not all seminary graduates become good leaders, but a whole lot of them do. Remarkably high percentages of teachers in our Mennonite colleges, staff members of mission boards and service agencies, and pastors learned Anabaptist best practices of Bible reading, caring for the poor, restoring right relationships, and communicating the transformative story of Jesus from a Mennonite seminary.

The price of an education is daunting if we expect the courageous persons who say, "Here am I" to pay it all themselves. Even though tuition covers only a portion of the actual costs of a quality education, too many of today's graduates are carrying unacceptably high debts, and too many gifted young people can't afford to come in the first place.

Do I, along with our board and seminary leadership, worry about that? All the time. Not because the education they receive isn't worth every penny. But because too many of us have lost the vision for investing in persons who will lead the church into a revitalized future.

Thank God for those who remember that the cost of ignorance and immaturity given full sway in local congregations is far greater than an investment in those who are ready to become masters of the craft. Thank God for those who know that investing in Christ-centered leadership formation will bear fruit long into the future. •

Ask questions with Sara

Join Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, in asking questions and engaging issues in the church. Her blog, *Practicing Reconciliation*, will "pose questions, test assumptions, resist labels, play with possibilities, experiment with integration, practice wholeness": www.ambs.edu/practicingreconciliation/